



Department of Justice

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Southern District of Indiana**

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MORGAN COUNTY MAN CHARGED WITH BEING A FELON IN POSSESSION OF A FIREARM

Indictment is latest local success in U.S. Attorney's Violent Crime Initiative

PRESS RELEASE

MARTINSVILLE – Joseph H. Hogsett, United States Attorney, announced that Thomas Wood, 23, of Morgantown, was charged with possession of a firearm by a person previously convicted of a felony. This prosecution follows an investigation by the Morgan County Sheriff's Department, Indiana State Police, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives.

“Together with law enforcement from across Morgan County, we are sending a serious message with these indictments that the days of using our local jails as a revolving door are over,” Hogsett said. “As part of our ongoing Violent Crime Initiative, we are targeting repeat offenders and taking these ‘worst of the worst’ elements off our streets and punishing them with the full force of federal law.”

The indictment alleges that on or about July 25, 2011, Wood was found by Morgan County law enforcement to possess a loaded Cobra, .380 caliber pistol. The charge further alleges that Wood was previously convicted of Burglary in 2007 in Greene County.

Announced by Hogsett in March of this year, the Violent Crime Initiative represents a comprehensive district-wide strategy to combat drug traffickers and criminals that use and carry firearms in their illegal activities through improved local collaboration and aggressive federal prosecution.

Already in 2011, the VCI has caused a dramatic increase in the number of gun-related charges – from 14 felony possession of a firearm charges in 2010 to 91 thus far in 2011. Major drug trafficking indictments are up more than 100% from where they were two years ago. And drug trafficking seizures have increased by more than seven-fold over 2010 numbers.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Doris L. Pryor, who is prosecuting the case for the government, Wood faces a maximum prison sentence of 10 years and a possible fine of up to \$250,000. An initial hearing on the indictment will be scheduled before a U.S. Magistrate Judge in Indianapolis.

This case is the result of Project Safe Neighborhoods—a project designed to reduce illegal drugs and violent crimes with the particular focus of cracking down on gang activities within the Southern District of Indiana. Project Safe Neighborhoods brings to bear a coordinated effort between local and federal law enforcement agencies to get guns out of the hands of convicted felons.

The charge is an allegation only, and the defendant is presumed innocent unless and until proven guilty at trial or by guilty plea.

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